

# Community Care

**ann craft trust**  
acting against abuse

Sarah Goff  
Safeguarding Disabled Children Manager

# Disabled Children

- 3.4 times more likely to be abused
- 3.76 times more likely to be neglected (Sullivan and Knutson 2000)
- 26.7% disabled children have experienced abuse ie 3 to 4 times more likely to than non-disabled children.
- Over 20% have experienced physical violence and 14% sexual violence (Jones et al (2012) Lancet).
- Increased risks of young people with learning disabilities to sexual exploitation (Cockbain et al, 2014; Franklin et al 2015)

# Safeguarding disabled children key themes;

(adapted from Taylor et al 2014)

- need training in additional risks faced by disabled children
- greater emphasis on communication and forming relationship with disabled children
- practice tends to be parent-centred and impairment-centred rather than child-centred because of extent of parents' needs
- Social and emotional needs and long term issues not always considered because of focus on immediate need
- Thresholds vary in terms of risk of significant harm
- understanding type of impairment and individual child's lived experience played critical role in helping to assess risk to child and possible forms of intervention

# Practice research:

- Some good practice where children were subject to Child Protection Plans
- Less likely that deterioration and neglect would be picked up when children are seen as in need
- Some drift and perhaps less willing to challenge parents and carers where longstanding relationships existed
- Views and experiences of the child not always sought
- LSCBs not systematically gathering data about disabled children

(Ofsted 2012; Thematic Inspection on the Protection of Disabled Children)

# Newcastle Joint Children and Adults SCR 2018 looked at Sexual Exploitation

Assertive proactive practice identified a young woman with learning needs who had been exploited

Enquiries revealed the need to **change their approach from waiting for the yp to 'disclose'**

Assume exploitation is taking place

Proactive stance to look for it

Early identification

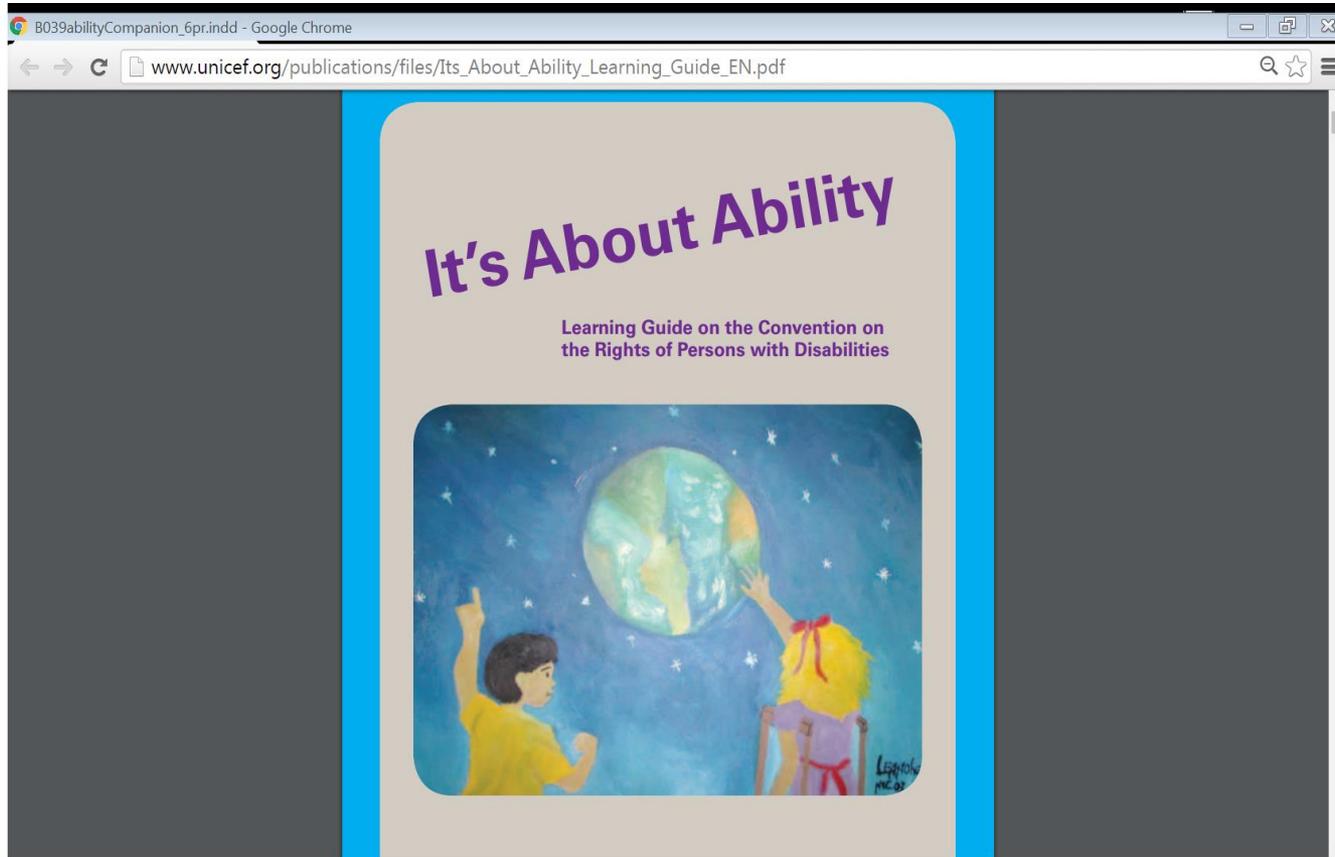
Long term support to recover from trauma

Similarities with Domestic abuse, modern slavery,

Support witnesses

Recommendations for strategic, national and legal priorities

[http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its\\_About\\_Ability\\_Learning\\_Guide\\_EN.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Its_About_Ability_Learning_Guide_EN.pdf)



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## Significance of our role as carers and practitioners in prevention

- Self defence skills are a flexible part of the individual developed through life and learning experiences; not fixed capacities nor inherent in the individual
- Hollomotz A, Beyond 'Vulnerability': An Ecological Model Approach to conceptualising Risk of Sexual Violence against people with learning difficulties' British Journal of Social Work (2009) **39**, 99-112
- Developing capacity ; to understand, to choose,

## NSPCC Comic Relief Study 2015

(Taylor, Cameron, Franklin, Fry and Jones 2015)

Talking to Deaf and Disabled Children about Child Abuse

### Barriers to help-seeking

- Confusion about what counts as abuse
- Disabled children/ young people's credibility was questioned
- The children sometimes blamed themselves
- Fear and social isolation
- Invisibility of disabled children within services
- Reflection; we often say tell us if you are worried, but, concretely, how?

## **Ofsted 2012 key case level recommendations**

- **obtain children's views**, taking the children's disabilities into account, and that wherever possible **children's feelings**
- ensure that all decisions and assessments relating to disabled children are **well informed by previous history and are based on up-to-date** multi-agency assessments and thorough analysis of risks and needs
- ensure that all disabled children receiving children in need services or subject to child protection plans have **detailed, specific, and outcome-focused plans**
- ensure that all children in need **plans are regularly and robustly reviewed** at multi-agency meetings
- **particular attention is paid to identifying when concerns are not resolved promptly or improvements are not sustained.**

# Assuming impairment as explanation for behaviours or signs of physical injury

The need to keep an open mind and consider a range of hypotheses rather than making assumptions

- Behaviour labelled as challenging
- Bruising
- Self harm
- Eczema
- Head banging
- Rocking
- Marks
- Sexual/sexualised behaviour
- Distress

# Key research

- Voice of the Child (Ofsted 2011)
- It Doesn't Happen to Disabled Children (National Working Group Safeguarding Disabled Children 2003)
- Safeguarding Disabled Children in England (National Working Group Safeguarding Disabled Children 2015)
- We Have the Right to be Safe (Miller and Brown 2014 NSPCC)
- Unprotected Overprotected (Franklin, Raws and Smeaton 2015)
- Deaf and Disabled Children Talking about Child Protection (Taylor et al 2015)
- It Doesn't Stop at 18 Transitions and sexual exploitation; National Working Group for Sexual Exploitation 2018
- Newcastle Joint Children and Adults Serious Case Review 2018 David Spicer.

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[Sarah.goff@Nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Sarah.goff@Nottingham.ac.uk)

Ann Craft Trust

Centre for Social Work

University of Nottingham

NG7 2RD

0115 951 5400

[ann-craft-trust@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:ann-craft-trust@nottingham.ac.uk)

**[anncrafttrust.org](http://anncrafttrust.org)**



Everyone has a right to be treated with respect and dignity. Everyone  
deserves to be safe.